Online or onsite settings, two ways of reaching the users of the Libraries of Barcelona

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SUMMARY

The culture of the 21st century and the major transformations of the digital era have led the professionals of the libraries to rethink how we should offer our services in this environment of constant change. Beyond the technical changes, which of course there are and we should bear them in mind, it is necessary to tackle the challenges which result from the new forms of cultural consumption and of access to information.

The users are becoming increasingly autonomous, more and more critical and want to participate in the services from a perspective which is more community based and with greater equality. Concepts such as "open access", "sharing", "open data", "copyleft", "big data", "privacy", "digital ID", "information in a cloud", "e-books" and "mobility" among many others, should serve us as a basis to apply this philosophy to our services.

An important part of these users access the information and services from their mobile devices and share their experiences in real time with the community network. They no longer exclusively use the services that the library can offer "in place", they want to access the services from any place and at any time and the Library must respond to these demands.

And all of this without forgetting that there is an important part of the population at risk of digital exclusion and that the Library should play a very important role in the fight against the digital gap with a training offer and personalised assessment and advice, the aim of which being the acquisition of basic IT skills.

The physical space of the library is still of major importance and has to continue being a meeting point for the community. But we can't leave it as this, the development of services in a digital setting has to go on increasing, and in both settings. Online and onsite have to interrelate and complement each other in such a way that one can't live without the other.

1. Introduction

The users of the libraries are becoming more and more virtual, invisibly so, not only those who physically enter the libraries but also those who search for information on our website, interact with us through the social networks, listen to music that we recommend on Spotify, comment on their reading experiences on the blog, or look for information about our activities through an app downloaded onto their mobile devices.

Aware of this change, in the Libraries of Barcelona we are paying special attention to evolution of the digital world and of the devices for accessing information so as to adapt to the informational needs of our users by offering them new services through new channels, taking into account that we are not only interested in the virtual public, but also all the citizens who enter the libraries; and that's why our virtual services always have an onsite link.

If we recommend a book on our blog, it should be available in our Libraries so that the users can take it out on loan. If a user can make a reservation at the information desk, they can also do so online, and in the same way if they want to make a suggestion or a consultation. If they want to see our programme of activities they can do so on paper or from their mobile. The tendency is that both settings converge and that the users can reach the libraries from multiple points of access.

The public opinion of our services is determined to a great extent by the perception of the users of the facilities, of the collections, of the services and of the personal treatment they receive in the Libraries of Barcelona. But the non-users have also formed an opinion about us, based on the information and opinion that they get from other users. And above all from the information they find in the net about us. For this reason it is really important to construct our digital identity and to provide services in these new settings.

Since the decision to have a website at the beginning of the creation of Libraries of Barcelona, to have a blog for participative recommendations, to the progressive presence in the different social networks, and including the publishing of electronic newsletters, or the development of applications or services aimed at mobiles, all of these correspond to a corporate strategy of creating a digital identity and of providing services also on the net.

Now we can no longer only provide service in a physical setting, our offer of services has to increasingly find a balance and be complementary in both settings.

2. The brand of Libraries of Barcelona and the configuration of our digital identity

The reputation of an organisation, of an individual or of a brand, is constructed as based on the opinion that others have of ourselves (Javier Leiva 2012[1]). In the case of Libraries of Barcelona, this opinion is determined to a great extent by the perception the users have of the facilities, the collections, the services and the personal treatment they receive in the libraries of the network of the city. But the non-users also have a formed opinion about us, based on the information that they have about us and on the opinion that reaches them from other users, and these opinions also have an effect on our reputation.

Libraries of Barcelona has a good reputation in the real tangible environment, you only need to take a look at the fact that year after year we are municipal service which is most highly rated by the citizens. This prestige helps us to have a good reputation, "a priori", in the digital setting, and at the same time obliges us to also maintain this reputation in this setting.

With the appearance of the social networks, more participative and more democratic, the empowerment of the users and their capacity to create opinions is really much bigger. We as organisations need to be present in the social networks, creating our digital identity, communicating our values and interacting with the users. If we don't do so, then our online reputation will become exclusively determined by the opinions of others (Julio Alonso 2011[2]).

The corporate image and the digital identity have to go hand in hand, that's why we always use the logo of Libraries of Barcelona in all the channels and our name in the social media is *BibliosBCN*. It is very important that the users recognise and identify us in any digital media and in all the social networks.

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[1] **Leiva-Aguilera, Javier Gestión de la reputación online (Barcelona: UOC, 2012)**

[2] **Alonso, Julio**. "Identidad y reputación digital". Cuadernos de comunicacción Evoca. Núm 5. Identidad digital y reputación online (2011). p5-p9

3. Digital maturity. The experience of the users before, during and after going to the library

The digital maturity of our organisation is determined by the amount of services and products online that we are able to offer to our users. They increasingly want to receive information on their mobile devices, their experience in our libraries is not limited only to our physical spaces, it begins before coming, through our website or looking at videos on our YouTube channel, while they are in the library, and when they leave and continue talking about us on the social networks.

Based on this idea of the experiences of the users before going to the library, while they are in the library and after going to the library, we will explain some of our services in the online and onsite settings. Two settings which are interrelated, which coexist and that should be understood globally.

3.1. Information about the Libraries of Barcelona.

Before going to the library

From the **website** of Libraries of Barcelona you can find information about the situation of all the libraries of the urban network, opening times, how to get there, if we have reserved car parking, the catalogue of services, the activities programme, links to the social networks, presentation videos, annual reports, statistics, rules and regulations, and everything that is relevant that the *BibliotequesBCN* can offer.

From the app *BibliosBCN* available in IOS and Android the users can know which is the nearest library to them, how to get there, consult the map, the opening times, and basic information. From the map option, which appears in various screens, you can access a map in which it is possible to visualise the libraries which are closest to their current position, as well as showing the best way to get there via Google Maps.

In the Library

There are different ways of finding out information about the libraries, these include:

From the **Contactless points** by means of QR codes and NFC chips, it is possible to access the basic information about the libraries adapted to the mobile: address, opening times, website, presentation video, activities programme. You can also know which libraries are most nearby and basic information about the closest study rooms. All the libraries of *BibliotequesBCN* have this type of 'signposting' accessible from mobile devices.

By means of the different **information leaflets** of each library and which are available to the users in the different display cases or racks spread around the different spaces of the Library.

Through the different **signposting elements** distributed around the different spaces of the Libraries, they have contact information, opening times, information about areas with Wi-Fi connection, services and rules of use, amongst others.

And by directly requesting information from the **Library staff**.

The users can directly share information from the sharing options of the app of *BibliosBCN* and from the website. Or from the different profiles that *BibliotequesBCN* has on the social networks: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, to mention the most known ones and the ones of most social impact.

3.2.   Access to the collection of the Libraries of Barcelona.

Before going to the Library

You can consult the **online catalogue** in which it is possible to know where the documents that form part of our collections can be found, and their availability. The catalogue has a basic and advanced search, allowing the users to filter by author, subject, key words, library, town, type of materials and language, among the most notable ones. Many registers include the cover, a brief summary of the contents, and access to the webpage of the author.

 You can find information of the section of **Collections** of the website of Libraries of Barcelona where you can find out about the thematic specialisations of the libraries and their special collections. Moreover, you can access the selection of websites and databases of the Virtual Library and download audio books in mp3 format.

It is possible to consult the repository of digitised collections, ***Trencadís***, and you can access the local digitised magazines and to know in which libraries the originals can be found.

In the Library

You can consult the section of **virtual loans**, by topic, based on the QR codes in the different onsite thematic sections.

The **online catalogue can be consulted from the computers of public use of the Libraries or from their own device,** by connecting to the Wi-Fi network.

The documents on the shelves can be consulted directly, and the users can flick through them, know their contents, see the state of conservation of the copies and other information that cannot be found either on the website or from the online catalogue.

After going to the Library

The users with a library card can directly evaluate and comment on the documents on the online catalogue. These comments require the users to identify themselves with the library card number and password. The publication isn't immediate, as it requires validation by a moderator.

3.3.   Recommendations for books, music and cinema

Before going to the Library

The recommendations made can be consulted at the **Bibarnabloc** www.bibarnabloc.cat, the space of digital participation and collaboration between the professionals of Libraries of Barcelona and the users of the libraries. With direct access to the latest articles published, it also allows searches to be made by cloud tags, by moods and by age categories. Moreover it's possible to see the availability of the documents and their localisation in the different libraries of the city. This blog was started in 2011 and counts on 60 library professionals who write articles from Monday to Friday.

The **thematic reading guides or the newsletters with the latest items** acquired by *BibliotequesBCN* can be consulted. So as to make these contents more accessible, we publish them on the Issuu platform, which allows them to be visualised from any browser with the same aspect as the printed publication. In these electronic guides there are links to the recommendations with the registers to our catalogue, so that the users can see the availability of the documents in any moment. There are also links to other related digital resources.

It is possible to listen to musical selections that some libraries of *BibliotequesBCN* post on **Spotify.** In the Spotify accounts of the libraries you can find lists of local groups, music related to novels and soundtracks that can be found in the libraries, music of the specialisations of the libraries, or related to the activities carried out by the libraries, a musical choice of the groups that visit the festivals of the city, , the latest musical selections, and the music that is played every day to close the library. The project, which started this year in 2014, currently counts on the participation of thirteen libraries.

In the Library

Projection of booktrailers of books available on the screen of the libraries of *BibliotequesBCN*. In the summer of 2013, and with the aim of measuring the impact of the audiovisual contents in the prescription of reading and the loan of books, we started a collaboration with *Bookmovies*. Over a fortnight, a selection of booktrailers is projected on the information screens of the libraries, reinforcing this action with exhibitions of the books recommended and actions on our blog and in the social networks. The observation of the behaviour of the users in the loans of recommended books allows us to reach conclusions about what the impact is of these contents in the reading consumption in our libraries.

Exhibiting of new items and recommended books. Traditionally the Libraries have used display cases or racks to exhibit the latest items and recommended books in the different areas or thematic sections. Since 2011, when we introduced our blog, all the libraries have dedicated a special space to exhibiting the recommended documents in the *Bibarnabloc.cat*. Furthermore, all these documents are marked with a sticker that says "We liked the *Bibarnabloc*. And you?" which has the aim of marking the physical copy with its virtual reference and to encourage comments from the readers on our blog.

Reading guides and new items in paper that each library produces and can be found at the disposition of the users in the different display cases or racks spread around the different spaces of the Library. All of these guides are also available in digital format.

Recommendations of the professionals based on the direct requests of the users enabling them to establish ties of complicity and trust with their local library.

After going to the Library

The users can share the information on the social networks and talk about the libraries of *BibliotequesBCN*.

The users can make comments on the ***Bibarnabloc.cat*** and use the **sharing** options that are available for each article.

You can see the **booktrailers** and the **video-recommendations through our** [YouTube](#) channel.

### 3.4.	Loans service

Before going to the library

You can reserve documents on loan or renew loaned documents through the [online catalogue](#). You can also see the availability and the localisations of the documents and the number of people waiting for a reservation, if there are. Furthermore the users can consult their historical record of loans and the documents they have on loan, as well as the deadlines for returning the documents. Some days before the fulfilment of the deadline for returning the loans, the users receive **a notification by email** by way of reminder.

While we don't have a platform for loans of digital books, these are the only options linked to loans of documents that the users can manage online.

In the Library

In the library you can take out documents on loan, make reservations and renewals. In the majority of the Libraries these procedures have to be done at the information desk by the library staff.

Since 2013, all the new libraries now have a **self-service loans** system based on RFID technology. This means that the users are autonomous for managing loans, returns and reservations and don't require the intervention of the library staff. Currently 3 libraries have this service and one of them has, moreover, an automatic drop-off box for returns and for the classification of documents. Apart from the new libraries, it is foreseen that in the next few years, at least the central District libraries will have this service.

After going to the Library

Sharing the information in the social networks and mentioning the libraries of *BibliotequesBCN*. It is very usual for the users to share images of the documents they have taken out on loan, or post them on the profiles of Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

3.5. Cultural Activities

Before going to the Library

From the **website** of Libraries of Barcelona you can find information about all the activities carried out in the Libraries of Barcelona. We have a specific channel where you can consult the activities programme for the forthcoming months and on the homepage the most relevant activities are highlighted for the near future.

From the app BibliosBCN available in IOS and Android the users can find out about the different events being held in the libraries of the city of Barcelona. We have a notable selection of activities which will be held over the next fortnight. From the browser you can search for activities by date, library and by title. By means of geolocalisation tools the users can find out about the recommended way of reaching the library where the activity is being held. Furthermore, the users can make their own selection of the activities they would recommend and share them with other users by email mail or through the social networks.

In the Library

From the **Contactless points** by means of QR codes and NFC chips, you can access the activities programme of the library and those taking place within a radius of 2km. All the libraries of BibliotequesBCN have this type of 'signposting' available from mobile devices.

By means of the different information leaflets and posters that announce the activities and can be found at the disposition of the users in the different display cases or racks and panels located in the different spaces of the Library.

The attendance of the activities is still mostly onsite even though there are some experiences of Virtual Reading Clubs that include retransmissions by streaming between two reading clubs that interact from Barcelona and from Medellin.

After going to the Library

The users with the library card of *Biblioteques de Barcelona* can subscribe to the electronic newsletter ***mesbiblioteques.cat*** so as to obtain information about the offer of activities, according to the interests chosen, that are carried out in their library (or in the libraries they have chosen) and of the specific and special discounts offered by the entities with which Libraries of Barcelona have established agreements.

The users can share information on the social networks talking about the libraries of *BibliotequesBCN* or by using the specific hash tags of each library.

3.6.   Reservation of computers, ICT advice and assessment and training and IT skills acquisition

Before going to the Library

From the **website** and **the app *BibliosBCN*** you can access the information about the planning of the training courses and the IT skills acquisition.

You can **reserve a computer** in any library or **register on the different courses** and ICT workshops through **Internet**.

There is also a service of **virtual attention related** to ICT, which is offered from a **virtual platform.** Through this platform, the doubts of the users about the use of the ICT in the libraries are resolved, such as the search for information on the net, the management of emails, the use of printers and scanners, and any other question related to the activity held in the Multimedia Spaces.

The consultations, which should be sent to one of the libraries that has a Multimedia Space by means of an online form, are dealt with by the support staff in these spaces, and according to the timetables of onsite attention.

The users can access the space of the **digital support classroom** and see the recommended training pathways and do a prior knowledge test which helps to decide which courses and workshops they should register in.

From our **YouTube** channel they have access to a selection of videos for learning the basic concepts for moving around the net.

In the Library

You can **reserve a computer** in any library or **register in the different ICT courses** and workshops directly from the computers of public use or by speaking directly to the staff of the library.

The users can use the **computers, scanners and printers** of the library or their own devices and connect them to the **Wi-Fi network**.

They can request ICT advice and assessment from the support staff who, between 1 and 3 days a week, provide this service in the Libraries that have a Multimedia Space.

They can attend the ICT courses and workshops in which they have registered beforehand.

After going to the Library

The users can access the space of the **digital support classroom** and do a test of the knowledge acquired in the training courses.

4. Conclusions

In the Libraries of Barcelona we have dedicated a lot of effort to planning, managing and maintaining our digital identity and the presence on the Internet and in the social networks. Our experience in this field is a reference in Catalonia and Spain and we have written articles and participated in congresses with the aim of sharing our expertise with colleagues.

In the field of training and IT skills acquisition we have also been pioneers, offering services since 2005 in our multimedia classrooms. And in 2009, we signed an agreement with Barcelona Activa, the local development agency of the City Council of Barcelona, to collaborate in the training and IT skills acquisition programmes which are carried out in the city.

The fact that Barcelona is World Mobile Capital has given us the opportunity to be able to develop services adapted to the mobile at a low cost, by taking advantage of the municipal initiatives that have developed contactless services and mobile apps.

What we have not been able to do, however, is to have a loans platform of digital contents. And this is a challenge that remains pending.

5. Future challenges

We currently form part of a working group which is working on the requirements of a digital loans platform at a level of Catalonia and with the participation of different levels of autonomic and local administrations. We hope that before the end of 2014 we will be able to go ahead with this project, as its definitive implementation is beginning to be urgent.

Another challenge that we have is the progress implementation of the system of Self-Service Loans based on RFID and that we will be beginning to develop in a progressive way in the central libraries of the Districts and those with greatest movements of loans.

The renewal of equipment and improvements in the network connections are also important challenges if we want to base an important part of our services on digital access. In this sense, we are beginning to incorporate tablets and laptops in the training classrooms and we have initiated a pilot project for the deployment of fibre optic cabling in three libraries of the city.

APPENDIX 1. BARCELONA LIBRARIES STATISTICS 2013 (pdf archive in attach)

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